

On the Prospects of Modal Fictionalism

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Possible world discourse has two important aims. First, it offers a promising approach to modal semantics. Quantifying across possible worlds enables us to reduce modal sentences to non-modal sentences. This reduction enables us to replace the poorly understood modal terms ‘possibly’ and ‘necessarily’ with truth-functional quantifiers. In this way, a powerful and elegant modal logic, developed by Kripke (1963) and others, provides us with a theory of formal validity which can also be brought to bear on philosophical issues involving, for example, counterfactuals, contingency, essence, supervenience and theological evil. Accounts of possible worlds also aim to explain which facts about reality make modal propositions true. Because modalities are alternatives to reality, it is difficult to see how a modal proposition can be true in virtue of some fact about the actual world. Hence, it seems promising to suppose that possible worlds offer the ontological grounding for modal sentences and the best accounts of possible worlds seek to do this. We will keep these two stated aims in mind throughout this essay, as they will ultimately form the criteria for our evaluation of modal fictionalism. First, however, we will sketch Lewis’ (1986) modal realism and Rosen’s (1990) proposed modal fictionalist alternative. Then, in order to motivate fictionalism, we will discuss several difficulties associated with realism which fictionalism overcomes. However, in section 3 we will see that, despite its attractions, fictionalism fails to offer a satisfactory reductive theory of modal semantics. In section 4 we will also see that it struggles to offer a plausible fictional basis upon which we can understand modal truth. We will conclude by sketching two alternative paths, timid fictionalism and Vaihingerian fictionalism, which those motivated by the concerns of the fictionalist may find it profitable to explore.

1. Modal realism and modal fictionalism

Given their apparent benefits, it is unsurprising that Lewis has described possible worlds as “a philosopher’s paradise” (1986, p. 1). However, the philosopher who wishes to enter paradise owes an account of the nature of possible worlds. Perhaps the most fully developed and interesting account is Lewis’ modal realism which takes possible world discourse at face value, maintaining that possible worlds really exist and, moreover, exist in the same manner as our own. The sentence ‘there is a possible world in which there are blue swans’ certainly looks like an existential claim and Lewis interprets it as such. As Lewis argues:

If we want the theoretical benefits that talk of *possibilia* brings, the most straightforward way to gain honest title to them is to accept such talk as the literal truth. (1986, p. 4)

Moreover, Lewis maintains that there exists a plurality of worlds in which there is a world corresponding to every possible way in which a world could be. Although Lewis accepts that other possible worlds are not actual, this is barely a concession to common sense because he understands ‘actual’ as an indexical term referring to everything to which we are spatiotemporally related or “us and all our surroundings” (1986, p. 2). Our actual world is in no way privileged from the global perspective, as other possible worlds are equally actual to their inhabitants. This is the core of Lewis’ theory of a plurality of worlds, which we shall call *PW*. As our theme is modal fictionalism, we will not stop to weigh the theoretical advantages and disadvantages of realism as opposed, for example, to the ersatz realism of Adams (1974) or Stalnaker (1976). Instead, in order to facilitate discussion, we will agree with Rosen (1990, pp. 328-9) that *PW* offers the best available basis for successful modal semantics. We will, however, add that realism also offers a particularly robust ontological grounding for modal truth. For example, there might have been talking donkeys because

there really are talking donkeys in at least one non-actual possible world. Thus, realism succeeds at meeting the two aims highlighted above and is to be recommended in that respect. However, realism is also associated with certain problems which modal fictionalism seeks to avoid with the following alternative.

Looking to build upon the merits of Lewis' realism, Rosen's (1990) modal fictionalism utilises a simple pre-fixing strategy. Generally, if P is a modal sentence and P^* is the realist's analysis of P , Rosen suggests that we replace instances of ' P iff P^* ' with instances of ' P iff according to PW , P^* ' (Rosen 1990, p. 335). For example, if the realist offers the analysis 'there might have been blue swans iff there is a possible world in which there are blue swans', the fictionalist paraphrases this as 'there might have been blue swans iff according to PW , there is a possible world in which there are blue swans'. The purpose of the fictive operator 'according to PW ' is to avoid any ontological commitment to non-actual worlds, while endorsing realist semantics. Rosen explains how this is so by way of an analogy with the fictional sentence 'there is a brilliant detective at 221b Baker Street' (1990, p. 331). Although this sentence is false if taken as a literal existential claim, there is a clear sense in which it is true if understood as falling within the scope of a fictive operator such as 'according to the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle'. As Rosen argues, "you can believe 'According to the fiction F , $\exists xPx$ ' without believing ' $\exists xPx$ '; for as a rule, the former does not entail the latter" (1990, p. 331).

2. The fictionalist's motivation

In order to understand Rosen's motivation we will now turn in some detail to several apparent weaknesses in realism, primary among which is what Lewis memorably calls "the incredulous stare" (1986, p. 133). As Lewis concedes, "modal realism *does* disagree, to an extreme extent, with firm common sense beliefs about what there is" (1986, p. 329). The

concern is that we simply do not believe in the existence of a plurality of worlds, and as Rosen says, “we have little use in the end for a philosophy we cannot seriously believe” (1990, p. 337). Despite its intuitive force, it is no easy matter to state the substance of the incredulous stare. It seems no decisive objection that a metaphysical theory flouts common sense. As Lewis rightly observes, “it’s not that the folk know in their blood what the highfalutin’ philosophers may forget” (1986, p. 134). It is also worth noting that we do not typically object to theories in other theoretical areas, such as physics or mathematics, purely on the grounds that they are counterintuitive. It is unlikely, therefore, that the objection is simply embracing Thomas Reid’s principle that in the “unequal contest betwixt Common Sense and Philosophy, the latter will always come off both with dishonour and loss” (1823, p. 11).

It may seem instead that the incredulous stare derives from the realist’s commitment to a substantially larger ontology than common sense allows. The realist’s inflated ontology is doubtless unattractive to many and it might seem that the comparatively deflationary aspect of modal fictionalism will be more appealing to those who share Quine’s aesthetic preference for “desert landscapes” (1980, p. 4). However, fictionalism’s apparent ontological economy is potentially deceptive because, as Rosen acknowledges, “in talking about, stories, theories, and other representations as he does, the fictionalist takes on a commitment to these entities” (1990, p. 338). Although the resulting ontology will depend on the nature of fictional objects, at least on one possible construal, the fictionalist’s ontology of *fictionalia* will match the realist’s ontology in size. In any case, we should not suppose that the metaphysician’s role is to fill an ontological quota dictated by our pre-theoretical intuitions. Also, we should note that the fictionalist cannot appeal to Occam’s razor, enjoining us not to postulate gratuitous entities, because fictionalism, at least, accepts that the objects in the realist’s ontology are theoretically fruitful.

It seems, then, that the disbelief of realism is likely to stem not from the size of the realist's ontology, but rather its contents. It is extremely difficult to believe in the existence of creatures such as talking donkeys, which lie beyond direct human experience. Indeed, such claims are likely to strike us as literally incredible. It is, furthermore, difficult even to understand what is meant by asserting the existence of non-actual, yet concrete, talking donkeys. Denying that an object actually exists is intuitively equivalent to denying its existence *tout court*. At least, it is normally part of our meaning, when asserting a contrast between actual objects and possible objects, that the former but not the latter really exist. Although Lewis' use of 'non-actual', understood as an indexical term, does not, of course, preclude existence, it would seem reasonable to prefer a theory which avoids commitment to talking donkeys and preserves standard linguistic usage, while offering the same theoretical benefits. Thus, if fictionalism achieves this, as it so purports, it would appear preferable to realism.

A further concern about the contents of Lewis' possible worlds is the implied diminishment of the actual world's importance. While scientific advances have successively shifted us from the pinnacle of creation at the centre of a static universe to the product of blind evolutionary forces clinging to a rather insignificant rock hurtling through space, there are, perhaps, strong ethical reasons to resist further humiliation. Primarily, we might worry that if realism were true then ethics would crumble because nothing we could do in the actual world would alter the goodness or badness of the totality of worlds. For example, if we were to increase happiness in the actual world, obey a moral rule or act virtuously, then a counterpart would, conversely, increase pain in his world, break a moral rule or act viciously. Thus, if our aim is to make reality a better place, modal realism apparently entails the unacceptable conclusion of moral impotency.

Lewis acknowledges this worry, but claims that it is only a problem for utilitarians (1986, p. 127). Even if Lewis were correct, we might wonder why a theory of modality should entail the rejection of a particular moral theory. In actual fact, the concern appears more pervasive than Lewis allows. For example, it is wrong to suppose that deontologists or virtue ethicists are only interested in what happens locally. The problem is hardly rendered less acute by Lewis' (1986, p. 125) suggestion what we ought to be 'egocentric', promoting the good of the actual world above the good of non-actual worlds and our own good above the good of our non-actual counterparts. At least, this response will be considered ethically suspect by those who hold some sort of principle of universality according to which we should treat like alike. It also might be psychologically difficult to care about the actual world when faced with its insignificance in the larger scheme of things. For example, we might doubt whether some personal project is worth pursuing in the knowledge that, even if we succeed, our counterparts will fail in numerous ways.

The fictionalist, by contrast, does not face such difficulties. We should aim to act ethically well in the actual world because other possible worlds are merely fictions. However much we may sympathise with, say, the plight of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, we will realise in our more sober moments that it does not matter much morally what becomes of her fictional character. It seems, then, that we have ethical grounds on which to prefer an ontology devoid of concrete possible worlds. It could, of course, be objected that these concerns are not decisive because ethics is poorly placed as an arbiter of ontology. Nevertheless, it appears reasonable to argue on ethical grounds that fictionalism is a worthwhile avenue of research. Moreover, if fictionalism offers a believable and morally conservative theory with the same theoretical benefits as realism, it would apparently be the preferable of the two theories. Unfortunately, fictionalism, despite being thus well-motivated, contains deeply worrying flaws, which we will now consider.

3. Fictionalism as a theory of semantics

The critical literature on modal fictionalism has largely concentrated on technical difficulties. For example, Rosen (1993) and Brock (1993) independently expressed the concern that fictionalism undermines its own objectives by containing an implicit logical commitment to the existence of possible worlds. However, as subsequent papers by Menzies and Pettit (1994) and, more influentially, Noonan (1994) apparently rescue fictionalism from this dilemma we will not pause to discuss it here. Another technical objection worth briefly noting was advanced by Hale (1995b) claiming that fictionalism must either hold that fictions are necessarily false or contingently false, facing trouble in either direction.¹ Again, as the objection does not currently appear decisive, we will pass over it. Instead we will focus on reasons to suppose that fictionalism fails not only on a technicality, which may or may not be redeemable, but fails to fulfil the central aims of an account of possible worlds. In particular, I will now argue that fictionalism is substantially less satisfactory than realism as a theory of modal semantics.

In order for fictionalism to benefit from the theoretical fruits of realism, it is important that it concurs in its assessment of modal propositions. Rosen claims that this is indeed the case:

Whenever the realist believes that his paraphrase of a modal claim is true, the fictionalist should have the same view of *his* paraphrase. This is a straightforward consequence of the fictionalist's shameless parasitism. (1990, p. 337)

Although Rosen goes on to qualify this by discussing a case in which the equivalence fails, he describes the case as “marginal” (1990, p. 342). However, even were we to allow that this particular case, involving the proposition ‘there might have been κ non-overlapping

¹ A full response can be found in (Rosen 1995). A counter-response to this is in (Hale 1995a).

physical objects' is somewhat marginal, Chihara (1998, pp. 176-7) has forcefully argued that there are cases of disagreement which cannot be so easily dismissed. In particular, Chihara has drawn our attention to cases in which *PW* is silent about the truth value of a proposition. For example, although Lewis denies the presence of spirits in the actual world, he is unable to foreclose the logical possibility that other possible worlds are populated by spirits (1986, p. 73). However, these spirit worlds are no part of the realist's story of possible worlds because Lewis only explicitly includes those worlds containing objects which can be generated by a process of recombination of properties found in the actual world (1986, pp. 87-8). Therefore, the realist neither explicitly asserts nor denies the existence of spirit worlds. However, wherever the realist is silent, fictionalism is committed to saying that the proposition is false. For example, the proposition 'there could have been spirit worlds' is false, because it is false that 'according to *PW* there could have been spirit worlds'.

It seems, therefore, that there will be more substantial disagreement between realism and fictionalism than Rosen foresaw or intended. While fictionalism is not fully committed to exactly the same semantics as realism, it does seem that a fairly close equivalence is important. Fictionalism is premised on the basic correctness of realism as a theory of modal semantics and much of its apparent strength lies in this direction. Moreover, the fictionalist must face the difficult task of explaining in a non ad hoc manner why we should prefer his semantics to realist semantics.

There is a further problem for fictionalism as a theory of modal semantics. As we have already mentioned, a central aim of possible worlds discourse is to reduce modal sentences to truth-functional, non-modal sentences in order to bring modal logic to bear. However, the fictive operator 'according to *PW*' is apparently modal itself. As Rosen acknowledges, we are inclined to offer the following modal glosses of 'according to *PW*, *P*':

If PW were true then P would be true; If we suppose PW, P follows; It would be impossible for PW to be true without P being true as well. (1990, p. 344)

Nevertheless, he claims that fictionalism offers “a powerful reduction of a wide variety of modal notions to one – a streamlining of ideology – with no cost to ontology” (1990, p. 347). However, it is unclear whether this ‘powerful reduction’ genuinely benefits the fictionalist. The replacement of several reasonably well understood modal operators by a poorly understood fictive operator is perhaps not a deal worth entering into. Aware of this concern, Rosen suggests that the fictionalist might be led to look for “some more substantive account” of the fictive operator “analysing it away in terms of more basic non-modal notions” (1990, p. 347). However, he himself does not attempt to undertake this task and is sceptical of its prospects of success, admitting that “primitive modality may well be an ineliminable feature of the fictionalist’s view” (1990, p. 347).

A further problem suggested by the primitive modality of the fictive operator is that it is likely to be intensional and, hence, not truth-functional. Following Divers (1995, p. 85), we can simply demonstrate as follows that this is the case. Begin by considering the following three sentences:

- (1) There is a world in which there are red dragons
- (2) $1 = 0$
- (3) According to *PW*, there is a world in which there are red dragons

Now, the fictionalist takes (1) and (2) to be false and takes (3) to be true. If the fictive operator were extensional we would therefore expect that substituting (2) into the scope of the fictive operator in (3) would preserve its truth value. However, we actually obtain:

- (4) According to *PW*, there is a world in which $1 = 0$

Because (4) is false the fictive operator cannot be extensional and is, therefore, not truth-functional. This is an extremely serious problem for fictionalism insofar as it aims to deliver possible world semantics by utilising the strengths of modal logic. We, therefore, have substantial reasons to conclude that fictionalism fails to preserve the semantic benefits of realism. I will now argue that fictionalism also fails to offer a satisfactory account of the grounding for modal truth.

4. The nature of fictional objects

From the analysis ‘P iff according to *PW*, P*’ it appears that fictionalism is claiming that modal sentences depend on fictions for their truth. We might immediately worry, however, that fictions are not the appropriate sort of entity for the task. Chihara, for example, observes that “there is something bizarre about letting some philosopher’s story logically determine what is and what is not possible” (1998, p. 179). In order to judge whether fictionalism has a plausible story to tell concerning the ontological grounding of modal truth, it will help to spend some time looking at accounts of what fictions might be. As Rosen tells us no more than that “it is conventional to regard these representations as *abstract* entities” (1990, p. 338), it seems reasonable to look to the better developed literature on the subject. Initially, however, it is helpful to draw a distinction between fictional works such as *PW* and the play *Hamlet* and fictional objects such as talking donkeys and the character Hamlet. Because it appears particularly unpromising to attempt to ground modal truth in a fictional work, which is apparently dependent on the time, language and social setting in which it was created, we will focus instead on accounts of fictional objects. On pain of circularity, we can immediately dismiss any account, such as the one offered by Plantinga (1974), which itself involves the notion of possibility. Let us then

briefly consider four other influential accounts, which we will call artefactual, Meinongian, make-believe and Platonic theories of fictional objects.

Artefactual theories, notably advocated by Sartre (1966), van Inwagen (1977) and Thomasson (1999), maintain that fictional objects are artefacts created by an author at a particular point in time. As Thomasson describes it:

Characters depend on the creative acts of their authors in order to come into existence and depend on literary works in order to remain in existence. (1999, p. 7)

For example, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was created by Thomas Hardy in the late nineteenth century, at which time the abstract object 'Tess' came into existence. Accordingly, nobody could have said anything true or false about 'Tess' before this time, because 'Tess' did not exist. So, we would likewise say that Lewis' fiction of *PW* was created and, hence, came into existence only in recent decades, until which time nothing could have been said truly about it. However, this is implausible for the fictionalist given people's apparent success in making true modal assertions long before Lewis' fiction, on which modal truth would depend, was created. Another reason for fictionalism to reject artefactual accounts is the mind-dependent nature they attribute to fictions. For example, Sartre tells us that the "faint life" we breathe into fictions "comes from us, from our spontaneity" (1966, p. 178). The fictionalist, by contrast, surely cannot agree that modal truth depends on human spontaneity.

Another approach to fictional objects, adopted by philosophers such as Parsons (1980) and Zalta (1983), is Meinongian insofar as fictional objects are classed as nonexistent objects. Despite the well-known objections to Meinongism, advanced for example by Russell (1905, pp. 483-84), Meinongian theories possess the virtue of addressing our intuition both that there is a sense in which fictional objects must exist because we can talk meaningfully about them and, yet, that they do not exist in quite the way that concrete objects like us exist. Moreover, the fictionalist might draw hope from the similarities

between Lewis' realism and Meinongism emphasized by Linsky and Zalta (1991). For example, the fact that Lewis' *possibilia* and Meinongian objects share the unusual feature of lacking actuality-entailing properties, suggests some compatibility between the theories.

Despite these attractions, we might well doubt that Meinongian objects, which include *impossibilia* such as the round-square, are appropriate entities for grounding and constraining possibility. Also, the fictionalist would face difficulties in explaining how he is able to quantify over nonexistent fictional objects in the required manner. In fact, it initially appears that placing a non-existent fictional object within the scope of an existential quantifier is a straightforward contradiction. It is difficult to see what the purpose of the existential quantifier could be if not to assert the existence of some object.² Admittedly, Meinongians have available at this stage the strategy of introducing a particular Meinongian quantifier, coupled with the application of free logic, a central principle of which is that "no existence assumptions are made with respect to individual constants" (Meyer and Lambert 1968, p. 9). However, it seems that fictionalism, by contrast, cannot follow this path if it is to remain faithful to realism, which uses the existential quantifier to assert real, albeit frequently non-actual, existence.

A third position worth briefly mentioning is Walton's make-believe account of fictional objects, according to which they do not exist in any sense whatsoever. Walton explains references to fictional objects as "acts of participation in games of make-believe" (1990, p. 391). For Walton this entails that propositions about fictional objects do not strictly speaking have truth values, but can be at most 'acceptable' or 'appropriate' (1990, p. 398). Again this account is hopeless for the modal fictionalist, both because it denies that

² See further Quine's discussion of ontological commitment, encapsulated in the slogan 'to be is to be the value of a variable' (1980: 15).

the fictionalist is quantifying across anything at all and because it denies that fictions are truth-functional.

An initially more promising approach, avoiding some of the above difficulties, would be the view that fictional objects are abstract Platonic entities, existing eternally. However, Platonism would pose at least three difficulties for fictionalism. First, it ill accords with the phenomenology of a creative author who, as Thomasson points out, we do not describe as “discovering their characters or selecting them from an ever-present set of abstract, nonexistent or possible objects”, but as “making them up, or creating them” (1999, p. 6). Second, even if fictional objects were Platonic, it would seem more natural to say that particular fictions, such as *PW*, were created or put together at a particular time. Third, a Platonic fictionalism appears at risk of collapsing into some form of ersatz realism, which the fictionalist rejects. The fictionalist would, thus, be faced with the task of explaining both how his position differs from ersatz realism and why it is to be preferred. It, thus, seems likely that Platonic fictionalism would prove difficult to motivate.

Although the accounts I have outlined above are not exhaustive, it seems that our discussion is telling against modal fictionalism for two reasons. First, it suggests that the modal fictionalist will have difficulty in spelling out precisely what he is using to ground modal truth. Second, even if he were able to develop an alternative account better suited to his purposes, he would also need to demonstrate that his account is generally a superior metaphysical account of fiction. Although we cannot rule out the possibility of fictionalism rising to this challenge, it would be an apparently daunting task, especially considering the *prima facie* implausibility of modal truth depending on fiction.

5. Conclusion and Alternatives

The fictionalist's plan, let us remember, was to endorse Lewis' realist semantics while offering an ontologically deflationary account. However, we have now seen that fictionalism fails to offer a truly reductive account and that it does not, after all, fully endorse realist semantics. We have also seen that its ontologically deflationary aspect leaves the fictionalist struggling to explain the grounding of modal truth. Therefore, we must conclude that fictionalism fails on both of the major aims stated at the beginning of the essay. In light of this, it appears that Rosen's fictionalism is at best an unpromising position and, at worst, untenable. Despite this negative conclusion, we have also commented that fictionalism is a well motivated position insofar as it avoids a group of ethical difficulties faced by realism. I would, therefore, like to conclude by gesturing towards alternative lines of research which the fictionalist might find promising.

The fictionalist who believes he can overcome the semantic difficulties might be inclined towards a position which Rosen calls "timid fictionalism" (1990, p. 354). Timid fictionalism is a theory linking modal facts with facts about *PW*, while denying that modal truth depends on fictions. Although Rosen's discussion of timid fictionalism is extremely brief, the approach has at least received some support from Nolan (2002). A welcome advantage of timid fictionalism is the option of utilising a possibilist theory of fiction to explain the dependence of fictions on modal truth rather than vice versa. However, timid fictionalism is a less interesting position than Rosen's fictionalism insofar as its objectives are more modest. Also, it leaves it unclear why the idiom of modal realism should prove so successful at capturing facts about modal truth.

A second alternative, stemming from Vaihinger (1935), turns on a response to Lewis' argument that "modal realism is fruitful; that gives us good reason to believe that it is true" (1986, p. 4). Although the utility of a theory is plausibly relevant to its acceptance, Lewis'

conclusion appears overstated. Without a complementary pragmatic theory of truth, which Lewis as a realist about truth as well as modality does not possess, it seems odd to conclude that a useful theory is a true theory. For example, we do not conclude that the undoubted utility of Newtonian physics entails its literal truth. Instead we nowadays adopt the practices of Newtonian physics on the understanding that it is a useful fiction. Initially, modal fictionalism adopts a similar tactic, accepting Lewis' premise of the utility of realism, while denying its conclusion of the truth of realism. Thus far the modal fictionalist would surely agree with Vaihinger that it is a mistake to suppose that because theories "are devoid of *reality* they are to be regarded as devoid of *utility*", which "is just as incorrect as the reverse inference – from their utility to their validity". (1935, p. 22).

The modal fictionalist then proceeds, however, to embed his fictive operator within a false biconditional, replacing instances of 'P iff P*' with instances of 'P iff according to *PW*, P*'. At this stage it seems that Vaihinger would have adopted a different strategy which may be more promising. Although Vaihinger cannot be attributed the perspicuity to have anticipated the debates concerning the nature of possible worlds, it is not difficult to guess that he would have shifted the scope of the fictive operator, replacing instances of 'P iff P*' with instances of 'according to *PW*, P iff P*'.³ Although this has the appearance of triviality, it gains strength when combined with a commitment to proceed, at least provisionally, as if 'P iff P*' were true. The proposal then has the benefit of endorsing the utility of realist semantics, which would retain its purpose as, in Vaihinger's words, "an instrument for finding our way about more easily in this world" (1935, p. 15), without forcing us to accept an unbelievable and morally objectionable ontology. Although it admittedly fails to offer an account of the ontological grounding of modal truth, it is no worse off than timid

³ Vaihinger does, in fact, suggest a similar understanding of modality, but in the context of Aristotelian substances (1935: 31).

fictionalism in this regard and arguably superior to Rosen's fictionalism insofar as it does not commit us to the apparently implausible thesis that modal truth depends on fiction.

It might be objected that Vaihingerian fictionalism is too modest in its objectives. The purpose of philosophy, it will be unobjectionably argued, is to deliver truth not fiction. Vaihinger himself, influenced by Kant and Schopenhauer, would have been rather pessimistic in his response, arguing that the human brain is merely a tool evolved in order to promote bodily survival and that true knowledge of reality is an end beyond its means (1935, pp. 4-5). Nevertheless, one might also point to Vaihinger's more optimistic comment that fictions are "merely provisional concepts destined to be replaced later or corrected" (1924, p. 80). Indeed, even accepting that philosophy aims ultimately at truth, it is arguably unreasonable to suppose that we need no useful fictions along the way. Although the Vaihingerian fictionalist need not eschew realist talk of possible worlds, he will still strive for a theory more consonant with reality. It may be, then, that in his quest for the advantages of theft over honest toil, the fictionalist will find some refuge in timid fictionalism or Vaihingerian fictionalism. However, it may also be that the most valuable gains will only be achieved through significant hard work and ontological cost.

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